

retailers as their customers, subject to the restrictions on imports and retail trading.

Transport Corridor Linking Mumbai with Southern Russian Port

32. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India is planning to establish a transport corridor linking Mumbai with the Southern Russian port of Astrakhan to boost bilateral trade with Russia;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any Memorandum of Understandings has been signed between the two countries in this regard and if not, the reason therefor; and

(d) whether the approval of various countries through which the corridor would pass has been sought and obtained?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) The Government of Russian Federation have proposed an international Agreement on transit along the 'North-South' Corridor to facilitate transportation via Iran and the Caspian Sea to the Russian Federation.

(c) and (d) The draft agreement was discussed in a meeting held in Moscow on 4-5 July, 2000 where representatives of the Russian Federation, Iran, Oman and India were present. Further discussions between the concerned countries will be necessary before a final decision can be taken.

Functioning of the Patent Office

33. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item "The Patent Logjam" appearing in the 'Economic Times' dated 19th June, 2000;

(b) if so, the reaction of Government thereto; and

(c) what steps are proposed to be taken to address the various problems and bottlenecks mentioned in the news-item relating to the functioning of the Patent Office of Government?

[24th July, 2000]

RAJYA SABHA

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Government has undertaken modernisation of the Patent Offices in order to streamline and rationalise the procedure for grant of patents. This includes infrastructure and human resource development, re-engineering of work procedures, computerisation of operations, networking of offices, focus on clearance of backlog of pending applications and awareness creation. Several steps have already been taken for clearance of backlog of pending patent applications. These include action for recruitment of additional Examiners, hiring of additional accommodation for the patent offices and acquisition of additional computer equipments.

Foreign Exchange earned from Export

34. SHRIMATI BASANTI SARMA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the quantity of tea, coffee, jewellery, leather garments and clothes exported from the country during each of the last five years and till date; State-wise;

(b) the names of the countries to which these goods were exported; and

(c) the details of foreign exchange earned therefrom?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (c) Quantity figures are available at a disaggregated level. State-wise data are not available. As per DGCI & S data the value of export of tea, coffee, gems and jewellery, leather and manufactures and textiles for last five years is as under:

(US \$ Million)

| Commodity/ Year | Tea | Coffee | Gems and Jewellery | Leather and Manufactures | Textiles |
|--------------------|--------|--------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| 1995% | 350.13 | 449.34 | 5275.21 | 1752.35 | 7468.72 |
| 1996-97 | 292.14 | 401.86 | 4752.71 | 1605.82 | 8045.32 |
| 1997-98 | 504.86 | 456.38 | 5345.52 | 1656.69 | 8504.85 |
| 1998-99 | 538.35 | 410.72 | 5929.35 | 1660.72 | 8322.77 |
| 1999-2000* | 407.49 | 314.79 | 7636.04 | 1538.39 | 9253.36 |

*Data for 1999-2000 are provisional and subject to change.